

Interview With Hassan Abdel Rahman CNN February 3, 2002 Sunday

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GUESTS: Hassan Abdel Rahman

BYLINE: Catherine Callaway

HIGHLIGHT:

Hassan Abdel Rahman, Palestinian representative in the United States, discusses Yasser Arafat's recent op-ed piece and the Israeli response to the op-ed.

BODY:

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CATHERINE CALLAWAY, CNN ANCHOR: For a Palestinian perspective, we turn now to Hassan Abdel Rahman, the Palestinian representative to the U.S., who's joining us from Washington. Thank you very much for being with us again, sir. Were you able to hear Shimon Peres' comments there, and if so, what is your reaction to what he had to say?

HASSAN ABDEL RAHMAN, PALESTINIAN REP. TO THE U.S.: Well, I believe that Mr. Shimon Peres is speaking of resolution to (UNINTELLIGIBLE). We are speaking of the borders of 1967. That's what President Arafat is talking about.

What we are saying, that we accept the right of Israel to live within the 1967 boundaries, and that Israel should accept the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own independent state on the 22 percent of historic Palestine, which is the West Bank and Gaza.

Now, the issue of Jerusalem, I think there is a little bit of distortion in the position of Mr. Shimon Peres. He is saying, the pragmatic situation in Jerusalem. Well, Jerusalem also was occupied -- East Jerusalem at least in 1967. And Jerusalem is not only mosques and churches. Jerusalem is the home of 220,000 Palestinians who live in East Jerusalem, which was next to Israel illegally. No country in the world, including the United States of America, accepted Jerusalem's annexation.

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And therefore, if Israel is really serious about achieving peace, they have to accept that West Jerusalem is Israeli, East Jerusalem is Palestinian. West Jerusalem is the capital of Israel; East Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine. And the two Jerusalems, East as well as West, will constitute an open city accessible to both Palestinians and Jews -- and Israelis. That's the realistic and the fair solution for Jerusalem.

As far as the refugee question is concerned, I think there is an international consensus that we have to have a fair and realistic solution for the Palestinian refugee problem. You cannot just brush the refugee problem under the table. It has to be dealt with, because it's at the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and therefore for our future generations of Palestinians and Israelis to live together, we need to solve this issue and solve it in a way that will ensure the rights of those refugees.

Yasser Arafat said that the solution of the refugee problem should not turn Israel into a Palestinian state. And we agree with that, because we do not want to change the demographic balance within Israel. Israel would continue to be an Israeli state, but that does not mean that the issue of refugees does not have to be brushed under the table.

The Jewish settlements, they were established illegally in Palestinian territories. They have to be removed in order for us to be able to establish the kind of peace that we want to establish with Israel.

CALLAWAY: So, what is Arafat willing to bring to the table in the form of a compromise that he wasn't able to bring to the table in the past?

RAHMAN: Well, I mean, Yasser Arafat, what he is saying is that I'm accepting Israel as a state within its boundaries of 1967. Israel should accept the Palestinian state within the boundaries of 1967, period -- 22 percent for the Palestinians, 78 percent for Israel. That's how we can establish peace. That will allow us to coexist next to each other.

This is a very, very important compromise, because the Palestinians -- there are many Palestinians who believe all of Palestine was Palestinian. In fact, even before I was born, when I was born, all of Palestine was Palestinian. Now, we for the sake of peace are saying to the Israelis, we will accept 22 percent of what was our homeland, and we will concede to you 78 percent. Please, don't try to come and share the 22 percent that is ours, because then you will be taking too much away from us, and this would not be acceptable to the Palestinian people.

I think there is an international consensus over this. I think every single state in the world supports this Palestinian position.

CALLAWAY: Hassan Abdel Rahman, good luck to you.

RAHMAN: Thank you very much.

CALLAWAY: (UNINTELLIGIBLE) peace process move forward for you.

RAHMAN: Thank you.

CALLAWAY: And thank you for being with us.

RAHMAN: Thank you very much for having me. TO ORDER A VIDEO OF THIS TRANSCRIPT, PLEASE CALL 800-CNN-NEWS OR USE OUR SECURE ONLINE ORDER FORM LOCATED AT [www.fdch.com](http://www.fdch.com)

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